

In fact, the Ports of Longview and Vancouver in southwest Washington have become a gateway for bringing wind energy components into the United States. I have been able to support their work through the wind energy tax credit. Last year, I got to visit the Port of Longview and see how our longshoremen expertly handle these massive turbines.

Washington's agriculture community is stepping up and embracing renewable sources of energy. This Spring, I was in Colfax, WA, for a roundtable discussion with farmers, and energy was a big part of the discussion.

I can tell you that Washington State farmers are poised to become active players in the renewable energy market. We talked about ways to help them make the transition into biofuel crops.

And there are other innovative projects. In Gray's Harbor, we are moving forward with a biodiesel plant. It will be a new home for Washington state biofuel production, a new source of jobs for the people of Grays Harbor County, and a new way to combat high gas prices. And in the Tri-Cities, we are moving forward with a new research center on biofuels and bioproducts.

In my home State of Washington, we have also been testing some cutting edge technology that puts information into the hands of consumers so they can make informed decisions about how—and when—they use energy.

With the Pacific Northwest National Laboratory and other partners, I helped kick off a GridWise demonstration project to test smart appliances. These appliances give consumers the power to decide when to run them based on the cost of energy. For example, your thermostat could indicate to you when heat costs are at a premium. Or you could set your dryer to run only when energy is at a certain price.

We all know that the cost of energy fluctuates throughout the day. Unfortunately, today's consumers don't know the real cost of energy at any given time. So it is hard for them to make informed energy choices.

These innovative appliances were tested for a year in 150 homes, a water-pumping station and a commercial building. The results are impressive. Researchers found that giving consumers these tools helps save energy and reduce demand on the electricity grid. They found that real-time pricing can also alleviate the need to build a new substation.

So I am really proud of the innovative work that is already underway in Washington State, and both Senator CANTWELL and I believe it can serve as a model for the progress we can make in the rest of the country.

Now I would like to turn to my energy priorities and some of the positive steps that this bill takes.

My first priority is to help make America more energy self-reliant. Here at home we have tremendous demand for energy and that demand is growing.

Unfortunately, today we are still too dependent on foreign sources of energy, particularly oil. That dependence affects our security and our relations with other countries. We need to reduce our dependence, and we can do that through some of the measures in this bill. This bill includes a renewable fuels standard that will increase our use of renewable fuels, including biofuels like cellulosic ethanol and biogas. It also includes tighter CAFE standards for our auto industry, and it increases the number of bioresearch centers focused on biofuel. This bill will also help us diversify our fuel sources by promoting alternative fuels, such as ethanol, biogas, and biodiesel.

I am disappointed that important tax incentives, which would spur the development of renewable electricity, increase the production of alternative transportation fuels, and help homeowners who make their properties more energy efficient, were blocked in a procedural effort by the minority. I am hopeful that these important investments will be restored as this legislation moves forward.

Second, we need to use innovation to help meet our energy needs. This bill will help move forward our innovation agenda by increasing research and development funding for new technologies. It authorizes funding for research in States with low rates of ethanol production. This investment could help Washington get off the ground in the area of cellulosic ethanol. This bill also boosts research in carbon capture and storage. We are doing some interesting work on that at PNNL in my home State, and I am pleased to support further research.

Third, we need to be more aggressive about conserving energy. It is everything from choosing compact fluorescent light bulbs and energy efficient appliances to consolidating errands so you make fewer trips in your car. Through this bill, the Federal Government will lead by example by using energy efficiently and employing conservation practices. It includes, as I mentioned, higher CAFE standards on our vehicles, which will help conserve gasoline. It will promote efficient lighting technologies, efficient vehicles and advanced batteries.

Fourth, we need to expand education so we have the scientists, researchers, and workers to help us reach a new generation of energy innovation.

The existing and new technologies that we will deploy to increase our self-reliance are complicated, and we need to make sure we have a well-trained workforce that is able to implement these forward-thinking technologies. This entails both continuing education for our current workforce, but also training the workers of tomorrow. We must provide these training programs while our young people are still in our educational system.

In my home State of Washington, several universities are addressing these needs by offering curriculums in

this area. For example, Gonzaga University in Spokane has a transmission line worker training program.

Central Washington University in Ellensburg wants to teach its students how to operate the efficiency technologies of the future. I think we should support these efforts by ensuring funding for programs like these. I am pleased that this legislation calls out this important issue.

In Washington State, we are also working to educate the next generation of energy innovators.

Washington State University, the Pacific Northwest National Laboratory, and the State of Washington have worked together to create the Bioproducts, Sciences, and Engineering Laboratory in Richland.

This is a pioneering research center where researchers will develop technology to turn biomass into energy and products. It will have teaching laboratories and classrooms and is located on WSU's Tri-Cities campus. I have been pleased to support this project from its inception, and I will continue to do so.

Finally, we need to protect consumers from those who would manipulate the price of energy to take advantage of high demand. One of the things that the Enron scandal revealed is that some people were happy to create false shortages of energy in order to drive up the price.

This bill helps us fight energy manipulators through a price-gouging bill that I co-sponsored, which is including in the underlying bill.

We have a lot of challenges in front of us as individuals and as a country when it comes to energy. But we also have the ability to craft responsible, smart legislation that will help move us in the right direction.

I am pleased to be working to make our country more self-reliant, to invest in innovation, conservation and education and to help protect consumers. I am honored to come from a State that is producing some of the most innovative energy ideas anywhere, and I am excited about moving this bill forward so we can use that progress to benefit our entire country.

FAMILY LEAVE INSURANCE ACT

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, every day millions of men and women across America get up and go to work. Their labor—whether it is building bridges or selling groceries, programming computers or cleaning homes—is what makes this country great.

Their work is the foundation of our economy and of our communities and families. Over 100 million Americans rely on their jobs to keep a roof over their heads and put food on the table, pay their doctor's bills, save for their children's college tuition, and retire in dignity. But all of that can be threatened in an instant when serious injury or illness strikes.

Fourteen years ago, we passed the Family and Medical Leave Act to enable employees to take up to 12 weeks

of unpaid leave each year to care for themselves or a seriously ill family member. For the first time, employees could meet their responsibility to their loved ones without risking their jobs. It was landmark legislation—the first bill signed into law by President Clinton in 1993—and tens of millions of families are healthier and more secure because of it.

But for millions of Americans, the ability to meet their family health needs is still out of reach. Most American families can't afford to take unpaid leave because it means they will miss even one weekly paycheck. They need every week's income to meet the rent, pay the electricity bill, and feed their families. A serious illness shouldn't mean choosing between caring for a sick child, spouse or parent, or suffering a financial catastrophe.

That is why I strongly support the Family Leave Insurance Act. This legislation will fill a serious gap in the Nation's health policy. It builds on the Family and Medical Leave Act by providing a safety net for the average working family.

Under this vital legislation, employees would be eligible for up to 8 weeks of paid benefits while they care for their families. With such benefits, workers would not be forced to choose between the families they love and the paychecks they need.

Most important, the program targets the employers and workers who will most benefit from the program. Lower income workers, who are least able to afford time off from their jobs, would be eligible for up to 100 percent of their weekly income. Smaller employers would have the option to participate—and would receive special incentives for doing so.

This is an idea whose time has come. California has led the way with its paid leave program, which has been a great success. Other State legislatures around the country are considering it as well.

The Family Leave Insurance Act is just one of the important new policies we should adopt to help America's working families. We also need to address the nearly half of American workers who don't receive paid sick days at work—and millions more who cannot take paid time off to care for their families.

That is why I will continue to fight for the Healthy Families Act, which will provide up to 7 paid sick days a year to workers, to help them meet immediate and short-term health needs not covered by the Federal Leave Insurance Act.

I commend my colleagues, Senator DODD and Senator STEVENS, for their leadership on this issue. This legislation, together with the Healthy Families Act, removes the risk that a sudden illness in the family will devastate a worker's financial well-being. Hardworking American families deserve no less.

I urge my colleagues to support the Family Leave Insurance Act.

GUN VIOLENCE

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, the plague of gun violence is one that affects our society on many levels. Across the country people are calling out for a change in our Nation's gun policies. A recent article, *The Battle Over Illegal Guns*, in the June issue of *Ladies' Home Journal Magazine*, is a case in point. This article detailed the tragic death of Wake County, NC sheriff's department investigator Mark Tucker, and provided yet another example of a pervasive problem in our country that has not yet been addressed.

On February 12, 2004, Mark Tucker returned home from work to eat lunch. As he left his house to return to work, he noticed an unfamiliar car with an open trunk parked in a field near his home. He drove over to investigate it. As he stepped out of his unmarked patrol car, an 18-year-old young man pulled a gun out of the trunk of the unfamiliar car. The teenager, who was on probation for breaking into cars, stated he had only intended to engage in a little target practice that day. However, because he was on probation, he was not legally allowed to possess a firearm. When he saw Mark's badge he panicked, killing Mark with a single shot.

Because the teenager had a felony record, he was not legally permitted to purchase a gun himself. In order to circumvent this, he simply had a friend fill out the required Federal paperwork for him at the gun dealer. This type of transaction, when one customer stands in for another who is not legally able to purchase a weapon, is known as a straw purchase. According to a 2000 report by the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, ATF, straw purchases are the most common source of crime guns. Approximately half of the 1,530 trafficking investigations examined in the report involved stand-in buyers.

Though Federal law enforcement officials have increasingly teamed up with local officials over the past few years to increase prosecution of firearm-related crimes, not enough attention is being focused on the source of the problem. According to the ATF, nearly 60 percent of the guns used in crimes can be traced to just over 1 percent of this Nation's licensed gun dealers. Five out of six of these guns are obtained illegally.

This article not only detailed the tragic events which occurred in Wake County, it illustrated a problem that plagues our society. Negligent dealers and straw purchasers indirectly threaten the security of our communities by facilitating the transfer of dangerous firearms to potential criminals who may use them in violent crimes. We must do more to help our Federal, State and local law enforcement officials keep guns out of the hands of those who shouldn't have them. Simply put, Congress needs to take up and pass sensible gun legislation.

IRAN

Mr. FEINGOLD. Mr. President, the international community's effort to press Iran to suspend its nuclear enrichment has been virtually grounded as of late and there does not seem to be a way out. This deadlock is of great concern to me—particularly because of the threat Iran poses to our national security strategy but also because I do not trust this administration to make the right choices when it comes to our safety and security.

As a known sponsor of international terrorism, and in light of President Ahmadinejad's belligerent statements calling for Israel to be "wiped off the map," we must redouble our efforts to ensure Iran is no longer allowed to violate international treaties, does not develop nuclear weapons, and does not become any more of a threat to our national security than it already is.

History has taught us that we cannot ignore the stated intent of those who seek to destroy other nations. A nuclear Iran would be a grave threat to the region, to Israel, and to the entire international community but that does not mean we should act rashly or act alone. Indeed, recent history has also shown that we are at our strongest—and most secure—when we are part of a strong multilateral team.

And yet, the Bush administration's saber-rattling flies in the face of any effort to legitimately build consensus for effective dealings with Iran. Our allies at the United Nations have worked with us in the past to support a resolution sanctioning Iran but they may not be willing to work with us again if these confrontations in the Persian Gulf become habitual occurrences. Such threats are stunningly counterproductive as they embolden Iranian hardliners to dig in their heels, undermine our multilateral commitments, and jeopardize our national security significantly.

Iran's ability to sniff out and exploit fissures within the international community and use it to their advantage should not be underestimated. Knowing this, it is in the interest of our national security to ensure there is strong unanimity among our allies at the United Nations. Critical to this effort is cooperation from Russia and China. To ensure they are on board, this administration must prioritize robust diplomacy with these two countries to ensure they are on board and engaged. Without them, there can be no real headway.

Just last month an International Atomic Energy Agency, IAEA, report said that Iran has not suspended its enrichment activities and we must take this claim very seriously. We must work with our allies to take concerted, decisive action to break this stalemate. The Security Council must speak with one voice and send a clear signal that continued defiance of the international community will not be tolerated.